

Notice of Motion to the February Meeting of the University Senate

That the Queen's University Senate endorse the Alma Mater Society's position on student participation in fraternities and sororities as reflected in the AMS constitutional amendments and policy approved January 31, 2013 and as seen in Appendix B (Senate agenda).

And that the University Senate mandate the Senate Committee on Non-Academic Discipline to amend the Student Code of Conduct to prohibit any and all on-campus forms of participation, including recruitment, by students in fraternities and sororities.

Background Information

In recent years, the issue of fraternities and sororities at Queen's, and the AMS constitutional ban, has surfaced repeatedly. Over the past month, we have spent considerable time and energy exploring the existence and history of fraternities and sororities at Queen's University, the reasons for the AMS ban on dual membership since 1934, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as policy options moving forward. We have heard arguments for and against the existence of fraternities and sororities at Queen's, from students, alumni, and community members. We received hundreds of responses to a blog posted on October 18th, and although the feedback form was not intended as a survey, the opinions shared were insightful. We have also consulted AMS and University legal counsel in order to better understand the role and authority of both the AMS and the University – neither of which are bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms – in restricting individual membership in a group and restricting groups from affiliation or resources.

After presenting our findings to assembly, the AMS Executive was tasked to create a policy that would reflect the spirit of the debate. In subsequent meetings, the AMS Executive presented both an amendment to the AMS Constitution, as well as an addition to AMS Policy Manual 3 (see below). These changes ultimately reflect the overwhelming opinion that fraternities and sororities do not have a place on campus at Queen's University, however they also recognize that Queen's students have the right to associate themselves with off campus organizations.

This policy, brought here for a Senate endorsement, ultimately aims to recognize the rights of students while still precluding fraternities and sororities from accessing campus space, money and other resources as the Society opposes the presence of fraternities and sororities, typically defined as externally affiliated organizations that are exclusive in membership and have secret oaths or pledges.

The AMS strongly believes that this is a great step in the way of maintaining one inclusive Queen's community and we hope the Senate will endorse the amendments.

Appendix B

Constitutional Amendment

Current Section:

7.01.13 No member of the Society shall be an active member of any fraternity or sorority, that is, any organization composed of students and former students which has a secret oath, constitution or pledge or which has a sign of identification such as a pin or Greek letters, or which is affiliated with any organization outside of the University. An active member is a member who attends regular meetings and pays dues. The Society shall prosecute any violation of the above regulations through the appropriate tribunal.

This regulation shall not be construed to forbid membership in such organizations as fraternal groups in which most members are not students. These include the Masonic Order, the Knights of Columbus, the International Order of Oddfellows, various political parties and other similar organizations.

Replaced with:

7.01.03 The Society opposes the presence within the Queen's University community of fraternities and sororities, typically defined as externally affiliated organizations that are exclusive in membership, have secret oaths or pledges and have a sign of identification such as a Greek letter or pin.

No such organization shall be recognized by the Society or the University or be affiliated with either. Without in any way restricting the generality of the foregoing, no such organization shall be eligible to receive or otherwise access any of the Society's resources including, but not limited to, funding and the use of University facilities/campus space for meetings and publicity.

Addition to AMS Policy Manual Part 3: Representation Policy

Section 26: Fraternities and Sororities

The Society opposes the presence within the Queen's University community of fraternities and sororities, typically defined as externally affiliated organizations that are exclusive in membership and have secret oaths or pledges. It regards fraternities/sororities as contrary to the spirit and letter of the AMS Operating Statement, specifically Sections #1 and #3, which reads:

1. The AMS shall strive to be non-racist, non-sexist, non-homophobic and ***otherwise inclusive and non-discriminatory;***
3. The AMS and its representatives shall act in an accountable manner and ***be accessible to all of its membership;***

The Society acknowledges the right of students to enjoy membership in organizations off campus of their own choosing. However, in full adherence to the AMS Operating Statement, no fraternity/sorority, as defined above, shall be recognized by the Society or the University or be affiliated with either. No such organization shall be eligible to receive or otherwise access any of the Society's resources including, but not limited to, funding and the use of University facilities/campus space for meetings and publicity. No such organization shall be permitted to conduct any form of recruitment effort on campus or to utilize any Queen's University or AMS resources for this purpose.

It is the position of the Society that the entire student body in effect constitutes a single community in and of itself. Where students choose to define themselves in subsets of that community, it is based on participation in academic, athletic and extracurricular pursuits within the tradition of the Queen's University experience, rather than within external organizations that are exclusionary in membership. The Society holds that fraternities ultimately create subcultures that are not only unaccountable to the University or the AMS but that develop values that are frequently contrary to the Queen's spirit and tradition. The Society recognizes that fraternities inherently enforce a gender binary that is not congruent with the Society's values. Such values risk bringing significant reputational damage to the University, fragmenting the student community, potentially diminishing the perceived value of a Queen's University degree. Further, the Society believes that the existence of fraternities and sororities in the community would detract from efforts to establish a positive relationship between Queen's University and the City of Kingston.

The Society holds that the student extracurricular university experience should at a fundamental level engender loyalty to the University itself and thus support the development and maintenance of an active, engaged alumni community to support the University and to which Society members will eventually belong.